

CLAIMS

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computing device having a computer-readable medium including computer-executable instructions for performing acts comprising:

- 5                   validating a server;  
                  deriving an identifier associated with said computing device;  
                  uploading said identifier to said server;  
                  receiving a secure repository from said server; and  
                  authenticating said secure repository.

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2. The computing device of claim 1, wherein said computer-readable medium further includes computer-executable instructions for performing the acts of:

- installing said secure repository; and  
                  receiving one or more activation certificates adapted for use with said  
15   secure repository.

3. The computing device of claim 2, wherein said one or more activation certificates includes:

- a first activation certificate in an encrypted form; and  
20                  a second activation certificate in an unencrypted form.

4. The computing device of claim 1, wherein the computer-executable instructions comprise a client-side object.

- 25                  5. The computing device of claim 4, wherein said client-side object comprises an ACTIVEX control COM object.

6. The computing device of claim 4, wherein said client-side object comprises a Java Applet.

7. The computing device of claim 4, wherein said client-side object comprises a NETSCAPE plug-in.

5                    8. The computing device of claim 1, wherein said method further comprises the act of uploading, to said server, data associated with a user.

9. The computing device of claim 1, wherein said identifier is based on hardware associated with said computing device, and wherein said identifier uniquely identifies said computing device.

10. The computing device of claim 1, wherein said secure repository is based on said identifier.

15            11. The computing device of claim 1, wherein said authenticating act comprises verifying a digital signature of at least some code of said secure repository.

12. The computing device of claim 1, wherein said computing device comprises a dedicated reader device.

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13. The computing device of claim 1, wherein said computing device comprises an open-platform computing arrangement.

14. The computing device of claim 1, wherein an address of said server is hard-  
25 coded into said computer-executable instructions.

15. A method of activating software installed on a computing device, said method comprising the acts of:

validating a server;

deriving an identifier associated with said computing device;  
uploading said identifier to said server;  
receiving a secure repository from said server; and  
authenticating said secure repository.

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16. The method of claim 15, further comprising the acts of:  
installing said secure repository; and  
receiving one or more activation certificates adapted for use with said  
secure repository.

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17. The computing device of claim 16, wherein said one or more activation  
certificates includes:

a first activation certificate in an encrypted form; and  
a second activation certificate in an unencrypted form.

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18. The method of claim 15, further comprising the act of uploading, to said  
server, data associated with a user of said software.

19. The method of claim 15, wherein said identifier is based on hardware  
associated with said computing device, and wherein said identifier uniquely identifies said  
computing device.

20. The method of claim 15, wherein said secure repository is based on said  
identifier.

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21. The method of claim 15, wherein said authenticating act comprises  
verifying a digital signature of at least some code of said secure repository.

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22. The method of claim 15, further comprising the act of receiving an activation certificate from said server.

23. The method of claim 15, further comprising the act of storing information  
5 identifying a user of said software.

24. The method of claim 15, wherein said software comprises text-viewing software.

10 25. The method of claim 15, wherein said software comprises multimedia rendering software.

26. The method of claim 15, further comprising the act of contacting said server at a predetermined address.  
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27. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions to perform the method of claim 15.

28. A method of activating software, said method comprising the acts of:  
20 determining whether said software is activated;  
if said software is not activated, issuing one or more instructions to obtain a secure repository.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein said secure repository is individualized  
25 for a computing device on which said software is installed.

30. The method of claim 28, wherein said instructions are issued to a client-side object.

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31. The method of claim 30, wherein said client-side object comprises an ACTIVEX control or a NETSCAPE plug-in.

32. The method of claim 30, wherein said client-side object comprises a Java  
5 applet.

33. The method of claim 28, wherein said software comprises a content rendering application, wherein said content rendering application enables the rendering of a first set of content items regardless of activation status, and wherein said rendering application  
10 enables the rendering of a second set of content items only if said rendering application is activated.

34. A method of enabling the use of content items in a multi-level distribution architecture, said method comprising the acts of:  
15 rendering a first set of content items without regard to whether a first status is activated or non-activated; and  
rendering a second set of content items only if said first status is activated.

20 35. The method of claim 34, wherein said content items comprise text items.

36. The method of claim 34, wherein said content items comprise multimedia files.

25 37. The method of claim 34, further comprising the act of obtaining an activation certificate.

38. The method of claim 37, wherein said second set of content items are encrypted, wherein said activation certificate contains a first public/private key pair, and

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wherein said second set of content items are decryptable only in the presence of said activation certificate.

39. The method of claim 38, wherein said second set of content items are  
5 encrypted with a first key, and wherein said first key is encrypted with the public key of said  
first public/private key pair.

40. The method of claim 38, further comprising the act of downloading a secure repository having associated therewith a second public/private key pair, wherein said first key is encrypted with the public key of said first public/private key pair, and wherein said activation certificate contains the private key of said first public/private key pair in a form encrypted by the public key of said second public/private key pair.

41. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions to  
15 perform the method of claim 34.

42. A secure rendering client comprising:

a long term storage device which stores a first set of content items and a second set of content items; and

20 a first set of computer-executable instructions which renders said first set of content items regardless of whether said client is activated, and which renders said second set of content items only if said first client is activated.

43. The secure rendering client of claim 42, wherein said content items  
25 comprise text items.

44. The secure rendering client of claim 42, wherein said content items comprise multimedia files.

45. The secure rendering client of claim 42, further comprising storage which stores an activation certificate.

46. The secure rendering client of claim 45, wherein said second set of content  
5 items are encrypted, wherein said activation certificate contains a first public/private key pair,  
and wherein said second set of content items are decryptable only in the presence of said  
activation certificate.

47. The secure rendering client of claim 46, wherein said second set of content  
10 items are encrypted with a first key, and wherein said first key is encrypted with the public  
key of said first public/private key pair.

48. The secure rendering client of 46, further comprising a second set of computer-executable instructions having associated therewith a second public/private key pair, wherein said first key is encrypted with the public key of said first public/private key pair, and wherein said activation certificate contains the private key of said first public/private key pair in a form encrypted by the public key of said second public/private key pair.

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